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**Organization/Unit:** [International Institute of Tropical Agriculture \(IITA\)](#)

### Maize farmers enjoy better grains thanks to Aflasafe

November 17, 2009

Farmers in Nigeria participating in the biocontrol of aflatoxins using Aflasafe™— a fungus-based biocontrol product developed by IITA— say the quality of their maize grains has significantly improved after the product's application, signaling prospects of a commensurate drop in aflatoxins on the crop.

"There has been an improvement in grain quality. With the application of Aflasafe™, the maize cobs are cleaner," attests Christie Kpatuwak, a maize farmer in Kaduna State who is among many that are participating in the trials.

Another farmer, Sanusi Liman of Zaria, adds: "Since the application of Aflasafe™, I have seen an improvement in the quality of my maize, basically cleaner seeds. The seeds do not have disease on them as before."

The trials, which are being conducted on about 85 hectares of farmlands across Nigeria, are coordinated by the Kaduna State Agriculture Development Program and funded by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and European Union's MycoRed project.

Researchers and regulatory officials from the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) see the improvement in grain quality as a welcome development.

"We are impressed with the results on the field and a final analysis is under way. A reduction in aflatoxin contamination means better food and health for the farmers," says Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, IITA Pathologist, who is leading the trials.

Produced mainly by the fungus *Aspergillus flavus* in maize, groundnuts, cassava, and yam chips, aflatoxins are potent causes of cancer and they also suppress the immune system causing humans and animals (through feeds) to be more susceptible to diseases.

Economically, high levels of aflatoxin contamination in agricultural products act as international trade barriers with global trade losses estimated at US\$1.2 billion annually.

"Aflatoxins hurt farmers' health and pockets. It also harms children and adults. The good thing is that Aflasafe™ will eliminate the source of aflatoxin contamination in these crops, benefitting farmers and their families in the long run," Bandyopadhyay explains.

NAFDAC says a reduction in aflatoxins in grains will benefit the country in many ways including improved health and incomes.

Aflasafe™ was developed by IITA in partnership with the Agriculture Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Ibadan. It contains non-toxic strains of the *A. flavus* fungus commonly found in Nigeria. Aflasafe™ is a registered trademark of IITA.

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